

## **Transcription: Alan Pilot**

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*OK, today is January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008. My name is Bill O'Hara. I am interviewing Mr. Alan Pilot, P-I-L-O-T, and he was a Private First Class with the Army during WWII in the 86<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. This interview is taking place by telephone. I am calling from my office at the Stephen F. Austin Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Pilot is at his home in Waco, Texas. Is that right, sir?*

**Alan Pilot:** That's right.

*Let me know if I say anything that's incorrect.*

**Alan Pilot:** All right.

*And this interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. That's my opening statement. We got all that out of the way now. OK, here's some questions I want to ask, Mr. Pilot.*

**Alan Pilot:** OK.

*When is your birthday and where were you born?*

**Alan Pilot:** September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1923, and I was born in Baltimore, Maryland.

*OK. And what are your parent's names and where were they born?*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, my mother was Mabel Robinson, maiden name. She was born in Baltimore. My father was born as Leon Pilot, and he was born in Cuba and was sent to this country to go to medical school, and uh, by his, by my grandfather, which he did not, he didn't complete. But anyway, he was born in Cuba in 1893 I think.

*OK, interesting. And he made his way up to Baltimore, is that how your parents met?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yeah, well, he was, went to John Hopkins University.

*I see.*

**Alan Pilot:** For medical, yeah.

*I see, OK. And, you were in the Army?*

**Alan Pilot:** I was in the Army.

*OK, and when did you join the service?*

**Alan Pilot:** I, well, I was at Directional Tech in Philadelphia in engineering school up there, and when I got my notice of induction in December of '42, and I was inducted at Fort Mead, Maryland.

*And you were how old then?*

**Alan Pilot:** I was just turned 19. That's when they were, as soon as you turned 19, the draft board gotcha. I didn't volunteer because I was in school.

*Yeah, OK. And where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7<sup>th</sup>?*

**Alan Pilot:** That's, that's, that's a good question. My closest buddy right out of high school joined the Marine Corps, and I was taking, he had just finished basic training and I was taking him down to the train station in, in Baltimore City, when we heard it on the radio.

*OK. So how did you feel about all that when you learned about it?*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, I was young and you know, and of course my buddy, he, he was gun-ho, but uh, I still wouldn't, I got out of high school and I worked a year in order to make the money to go to school. And uh, but a lot of my friends did join early.

*OK.*

**Alan Pilot:** And uh, some of 'em in fact were, had joined the Marines, had been wounded in the early battles and were home already before I just, before you know...

*Yeah.*

**Alan Pilot:** ...I was inducted.

*Yeah, OK. And what about when the atomic bomb was dropped?*

**Alan Pilot:** That's another good question. We, well I'll say this and I'll, I'll repeat it later, but we were redeployed from Europe to the Pacific for the invasion of Japan. We were the first combat troops back from Europe, given 30-day recuperation furloughs, sent to the West Coast for embarkation. We were at sea when they dropped the bomb, headed for the Philippines for a staging area for the invasion of Japan.

*OK.*

**Alan Pilot:** We thought we were coming home. *[laughs]* You know, because the ship turned around, we said hey, we're going home, and see, all of this was announced over the PA systems and all that, but we just had, we had some repair, we had some problems and had to have it repaired. We turned around and, and went on, went back to the Pacific, went to the Philippines.

*So you'd been in Europe.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes. I did my combat in Europe.

*And then you came back to the United States?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, we were the first combat troops back. We, we thought we won the war. I mean it was quite a celebration.

*Yeah?*

**Alan Pilot:** Fire boats, the whole bit. There's pictures of that still in the old news reels of the – the division, uh, coming up in, uh, New York harbor, and the welcome that we got. We were less deserving of the, the hundred and, I think it was eighty-second that came in right after us. They should've gotten the glory, not us, because they were much more deserving than we were as a division. But anyway, uh, we, we uh, we were redeployed. We were, we were called the symbol of redeployment. Gave us 30-day recuperation furloughs, reassembled in Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, and then sent immediately and got, got filled up again. Replace all the replacements and guys that killed and wounded, whatever you know, or uh, they gave us physicals and made sure everybody was in good shape. Then we were sent to uh, San Francisco for debarkation.

*Wow. Then they put you on a...*

**Alan Pilot:** Put us on troop ships.

*On troop ships? And off you went headed toward ...*

**Alan Pilot:** Yeah, we landed at Leyte in the Philippines...

*Uh-huh...*

**Alan Pilot:** ...stayed there a while, and then came on up to Luzon later, and uh, we were, there was still some activity. We got into the very last of the Japanese that didn't want to surrender. We had to help convince 'em of that.

*So you did see some action over in the Pacific -*

**Alan Pilot:** I had a few. Of course, we're way ahead of the story, but it doesn't make any difference. That's what -

*So what I understand so far of your experience, you traveled to Europe and then you went –*

**Alan Pilot:** We were, we, I, I served in all theaters of operation.

*That's amazing. And before that, before you were inducted and shipped out to Europe, did you, what was your travel experience before that?*

**Alan Pilot:** My what?

*Travel experience. Had you traveled any?*

**Alan Pilot:** Well I, I never left, I, I don't think I ever went there – well, we, we did go to New York to live for two years during the Depression. We had to go up there to, in order to, my family to make it.

*Yeah?*

**Alan Pilot:** And we, we, there was three families living in one tenement. It was pretty rough.

*I'll bet.*

**Alan Pilot:** That was my travel experience.

*You went from Baltimore to New York.*

**Alan Pilot:** Baltimore to New York and back. My mother's got all she could stand of it, us living in those conditions, and we came back to Baltimore after two years, or actually the little town of Woodlawn, a suburb of Baltimore.

*Yeah, and so you got out of high school -*

**Alan Pilot:** In 1941.

*And you were getting ready to go to college?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes. I, I had to work a year because we didn't have the money for me for college, so I had worked a year, saved my money and then uh, enrolled over at Directional Institute of Technology in Philadelphia in chemical engineering. I found out in a short order I wasn't going to be an engineer. *[laughs]*. The math courses were too much for me.

*Once you found out it was that much math -*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, and Directional is a, it's a fine engineering school. The reason I went there, it had what they call a five-year program. The first year you went full time. Well, I earned the money enough to get through the first year, and then after that, you would work in industry for six months and go to school for six months, making it a five-year program. So I felt like I would work in industry and earn enough money to go back to school each, after the uh, why, working. It was a good program, but it didn't pan out. Uncle Sam, well I tell you what, I was, I was almost flunking out anyway. I, I was not prepared to go into engineering coming from a county school which not, you know, they didn't offer the courses to prepare me for uh, for engineering.

*Well, it says on this information sheet I have that you were a combat medic.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes.

*And um, so I, I guess you got your training as a medic with the Army?*

**Alan Pilot:** Oh yes. I mean, at the appointment of the 86<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

*Mm-hmm.*

**Alan Pilot:** In other words, it was formed in '42, December, and we, the cadre ??? was there that and then us recruits came in in January of '43, and went into basic training. In fact the, the, the amusing thing was, when I went in, they were making assignments. They had because of my eyes, they put a, a limit of service stamp on my, on the, on my papers, because I was pretty near-sighted, and so when I got to where they were, got to Fort, I mean Camp Howse in Gainesville, Texas, the guy that's making the assignment, this officer put you're going to the medical detachment. I said I don't want to go to medical. I want to go to an, an infantry unit. He, he says, that's good spirit, son, he says, but you're going to the medics. *[laughs]*. Anyway...

*So you didn't have any medical training before that?*

**Alan Pilot:** No, no, no.

*Well, I find it interesting that your father came over um, to, initially I guess his dad, your grandfather wanted your father to be a doctor.*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, yeah, well that had nothing to do with it. It was all chance, Bill, all chance.

*Yeah, I see that, but it's kind of interesting how it all worked out.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, it is. Now there were a number of guys that had been, they weren't in medical school because we were all 18-, 19-year-old kids, but were in pre-med in college, and we had about four or five of 'em become doctors after uh, after they got out of the service. But our medical training was fairly limited. I mean they, they gave us, they, we had anatomy, pharmacopeias, and other things, talking about drugs, but our primary purpose, in other words we were assigned, in other words I was, we were training basically to do one of two things, to be a company aid man, which you are assigned to a rifle company, or you were uh, worked in the battalion aid station, stuff like that, uh, which just behind the lines. In other words, that's the first, when you send a man back off the lines, he goes to the battalion aid station first. But anyway, our training was fairly basic. We were basically taught to treat shock, stop hemorrhaging, and get their butts back to the aid station as soon as possible. That's basically what, you know, we uh, we would administer morphine, uh I had these little morphine syringe that you'd give a guy to help combat the shock. But anyway that, our training was fairly basic, but we did get medical training, yes.

*OK, well you were at the Battle of the Bulge?*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, the tail end of it.

*OK, well from -*

**Alan Pilot:** Because we got there in February.

*OK, well that, um, uh, we had a lot of American lives lost in that battle.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes.

*And you had a real important job, you know, trying to save lives. It must have been –*

**Alan Pilot:** Speak up, Bill.

*OK, in your job as a medic, your job was to help save some American lives.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, yes Bill, yes.

*I'm sure you witnessed some uh -*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, uh, yes, I had my share. We, we were in comp, out a couple of months, and it was pretty steady.

*Yeah.*

**Alan Pilot:** But it was, we didn't get the brunt of the, the Bulge. We got the roar, and that was, there were 100,000 German elite troops bottled in that area...

*Yeah.*

**Alan Pilot:** And our job was to split the pocket. We had another division, I think it was the 95<sup>th</sup>, I'm not sure.

*Yeah.*

**Alan Pilot:** But anyway, we came in, we brought in, where we were introduced to combat was in uh, Munich. Not Munich, I'm sorry, Cologne. And we fought in and we were standing, we stepped on the East, or the West Coast of the Rhine River. The Germans were on the other side. But we were a holding force. We relieved the 8<sup>th</sup> Division was what we did there, and we were a brand new division, so they probably, they put us in what they thought was a, uh, calm sector, and uh, and it was, we had some casualties there from, uh, from artillery. The biggest thing that I remember and it's pretty indelible in my mind is that the old Cologne cathedral was a uh, forward observer point where, see I was, I was with the E Company and H Company. Well H has got the heavier weapons. They had the 80, 81-millimeter mortars. And so they had an observation post up the tip, at the top of the, of the Cologne cathedral, and I remember climbing up there. It was completely gutted inside. That most of Cologne was, was uh, was nothing. It was just completely destroyed by our artill-, I mean our Air Force, Air Corps then. But anyway, I was climbing up the, the enter, just holding on to try and get, and they had a, some, they had gotten some planks and put across right at the very top where they could look over on the East side of the Rhine River and could see any activity, you know. Well, while we were there, they started to shell, and some of 'em fell down in the bottom of the church because we were up, up here on the steeple, and it was pretty scary. That was my basic introduction, but the thing that I also remember that was we relieved the 8<sup>th</sup> Division. It was, it was night, dark, and I was uh, we had come up in, in uh, uh, well we transported up, and anyway we disembarked off of the trucks and we just started going, moving forward, and I tripped over something and I lost my helmet and I reached around hunting for it, and I put, and this is my introduction to combat, I put my hand on a dead German's face, and I just screamed, boy how, and they, of course I was reprimanded because we were supposed to be doing this under dark. They just told me to keep quiet, Doc. I earned and to me, it's a great honor, I earned the, they called me Doc, and that to me was quite an honor because that mean they respected you.

*Right, well I also see that you earned the Bronze Star.*

**Alan Pilot:** That was issued in after, right after the war. In other words, there was some commission that decided that all the officers were citing each other, you know, basically, and they decided that the enlisted men needed to share into some of this, so they made a study of the guys and what, and if you received a combat badge, the combat infantryman's badge, or a combat medic's badge, and your record was clean basically that you would receive a Bronze Star. Now it wasn't for a specific valor. It was just a Bronze Star for uh, duty under fire, whatever, you know, but it wasn't a specific act of valor. But uh, and the fact is, I, I didn't even

find out about this until about a year ago, and I wrote in about it and then I got a letter saying yes, I was eligible, and I still haven't heard from 'em, but they said it could take a number of months before – but that's, that's the way it was. It wasn't for a specific act of valor.

*I see. So your um, what was your total time?*

**Alan Pilot:** What was my what?

*Your total amount of time with the Army when – from the time you were inducted - ?*

**Alan Pilot:** I lacked a week being three years.

*OK.*

**Alan Pilot:** Because I went in in January of '43 and got out in January of '46.

*OK, and um, so you went over to Cologne and that's in, is that in France?*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, no, Cologne is Germany.

*Germany, OK.*

**Alan Pilot:** No, we landed at LeHavre, France.

*OK.*

**Alan Pilot:** We were sent to these, called a Camp Old Gold, because I remember I used to smoke Old Gold cigarettes, and uh, and we were there oh, this was in early, it was in February because I know because of my wife, our anniversary is in February and I was away from her and feeling very sorry for myself.

*So you were a married man when you went over there? At 19?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes. Oh yeah, well that's another story, too.

*Oh, I'd love to hear that one, too.*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, remember, we were at Camp Howse.

*Right.*

**Alan Pilot:** OK, 30 miles from Camp Gainesville is a, is Denton, and there was this – then it was called Texas State College for Women. It's Texas Woman's University now. You're familiar with that, in Denton?

*In Denton, yes sir.*

**Alan Pilot:** And there was, we found out that there was this girl's school, so we all kind of gravitated down there.

*Of course...*

**Alan Pilot:** How I met my wife, on our first, we, they wouldn't even give us leave until, I don't know whether it was probably uh, 30 or 45 days, we didn't do anything but, you know, trained and stuff. There was no uh, no leave or anything. But our first leave, we went into Gainesville and to a USO. We heard that there was a, a dance there, so we went over there and here is my wife, she was with a group it was from her church group had gone up there – it was about, I don't know, 20 of 'em, and here is about 300 GI's surrounded this little dance floor, and I, and you know, and I, and I spotted her, and you know, to me it was just, it was just the way it should've been. It was the way, it was the way the Lord planned it. But anyway, I spotted her, and I went, and I danced with her and I liked the way she danced. I was, I was known as the jitterbug king of my high school back in my high school days. But anyway, she could follow me real well. Well, I told her my life story and she didn't tell me anything but her first name. But so this is the way our romance got started.

*And what is her first name?*

**Alan Pilot:** Theo – T-H-E-O.

*OK.*

**Alan Pilot:** Theo. Uh, she was from Waco, and I ended up here, but anyway, I, I, you know, you would dance maybe 20 seconds and you'd get cut in because of all the guys, so, but, so I found, you know, and then, this is when I found out about where she went to school and I went on down there, but I, they had a date bureau there. I went to the date bureau and, because I didn't, I had, I didn't know her but except her first name. But here's where I think it was intended. I dated this young lady for I don't know maybe a month or so, and then one of my buddies went into town, I went there with, says I got a date with this gal, says maybe she'll get you a, get you a date, too. I said great, you know. So we go to this particular uh, dormitory. I was sitting down on the, on the steps down below there because he, he went in. They had pretty strict rules, particularly TSCW back then had pretty strict rules about how far you can go. You can go in the dormitory but you can only be there in the sitting area.

*Right.*

**Alan Pilot:** But anyway, this gal goes over and asks my wife. She says oh no, she says I'm tired of dating these old soldiers. I don't want, I don't want to date them. But anyway, she, she persuaded her. She says well, go down and look at him. So she goes down, I look up, she looks down at me, and we recognized each other from that dance. And that's when I think I fell in love.

*Oh man, that's great.*

**Alan Pilot:** She had a beautiful, still does, has a beautiful body. She had these pretty legs. But anyway, it started from there, and then we dated regularly until we got, uh, we got engaged that summer, and uh, which was unusual for her because she's a pretty level-headed girl. But another interesting thing is there were five guys from my unit, the 343<sup>rd</sup> medical detachment, that met and married gals from TSCW, or TWU, five guys, and uh, but that, but that's the way I met her.

*So you were married before you went -*



**Alan Pilot:** And we got married in February of '44, and a year later I went overseas. Oh my God. As I said, I got her pregnant and run overseas. She was pregnant when we went over.

*Oh my.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yeah, we, we were, she was a camp follower. Everywhere I went, she would go. But uh, we were after our basic and then maneuvers, we went on maneuvers in October or November of '43, Louisiana maneuvers, and three months of that horrible condition, and then went to Camp Livingston in uh, uh, Alexandria, out of Alexandria, Louisiana, and there's a, there's a thing down there now. They got a, it's on the reserve units, I forgot what that is – Camp something, but there's about the 86<sup>th</sup> Division and stuff down there, and all the divisions that were on maneuvers down there and during the war. And I went down and looked at that. But anyway, we, then we went to California to take amphibious training. We were scheduled for the invasion of the Philippines. That's what was our -

*OK.*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, let me get back from where after we got off of maneuvers, from November to Jan-, November of, October of '43, to January of '44, we were I think possibly being thought of as a uh, because we always had good ratings. I mean the division, we had some good officers and stuff, but anyway, possible for the, for D-Day. But that changed. When they pulled out a bunch of our guys and filled 'em with new guys, and these, these, the ones they pulled out went to, went to uh, the field divisions in, in England. But I firmly believe that we missed D-Day, thank God. And I think it's just through, through their, the planning. So they decided then they'd get us ready for the invasion of uh, the Philippines. Now this was in as I say, in uh, February of, of '44. Well, we got over there and we did all the amphibious training, they say the same training that the Marines get, you know, uh, we're on troop transport, we come down, we get down into the LCDP's, you know, that landing craft? \_\_\_\_ personnel they called 'em. The famous Higgins boats?

*Right.*

**Alan Pilot:** And we hit San Clemente Island which was an island out from San Diego, hit the beaches there and did all the training. And then they knew there was a, they, they were looking at the buildup of the German forces in Europe, and they knew something was coming, so in December of '44, or January, we were sent, uh, that's when we got our word that we were going to go to uh, to Europe. They didn't tell us that we would be. You're going to, to uh, Boston. I think it was Camp Miles Standish. It was, it was an embarkation camp, that's all it was. And we were sent there, and uh, got there in the last part of January. We were only there for about ten days and they put our butts on that transports and sent us to, to Europe, and uh, I remember we had two different U-boat uh, alerts, where we all had to go up on board with our uh, lifejackets and stand, but uh, nothing ever came of it evidently. They chased them off. By that, by this time in February of '45, they had, they had that, that problem pretty well licked, and because I think they had broken the German code. They knew about where the U-boats would be. You may have read some of that history about how they broke that code.

*I've read some, yeah.*

**Alan Pilot:** But anyway, uh, so, so we landed then at LeHavre in the first of Feb-, the first part of February, and as I told you then we was going to Camp Old Gold and then shipped on, on the line there at Cologne. And uh, we were there maybe two weeks and then they said well, the roar pocket was the toughest combat that we encountered, bigger stuff. Because there as I told you there were about 100,000 late German troops, SS and, and the uh, uh, Panther Corps, you know.

*Oh yeah, the Panthers, were they the tanks?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yeah, that's the tanks. The Panther is a German, it's a tank, and uh, we were thrown into that. We, we met immediate resistance, and we were fairly green. You know we, all of a sudden, we got shot at a little bit there in Cologne, but not anywhere where the intense combat that we got into there at the roar, and uh, that's, that's when I was really a medic because we had lots of casualties.

*How was your leadership -*

**Alan Pilot:** Pardon?

*How was your leadership, your uh, your on the ground commanders?*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, most of them very good. In fact, uh, our regimental commander wrote a book after he – he was discharged right after, medical discharged right after the Europe, after the war ended in Europe because he getting in poor health, but he was a front line, uh, regimental commander, and our battalion commander was very good. He got us out of some, some pretty tough scrapes. So our, our leadership was pretty good overall.

*I wanted to ask you tell the story – I'm really impressed with the amount of training that you had before you went over.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes.

*You had what, a year or so?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, we had, oh yeah, well, basically after we got through basic, I'll say basic training for a medic was you know, all the, all the courses, and then the advanced training is where you go out and as, work. I was assigned to a, to a company. That's my whole time with the \_\_\_\_ Company. I did not, I was not at the detachment any longer. I was, became part of Company E as their medic, and stayed with 'em, lived with 'em, ate with 'em, you know, the whole bit, in advanced training, and this is where they, you know, they coordinate everything as a division. This is when they go on these maneuvers and operations and just like that, you know. Of course the Louisiana maneuvers, you have lot of, of live uh, fire operations. We had a bunch of guys hurt there still. We had, I remember we had three or four guys killed uh, from truck accidents running off a bridge, things like that.

*This is during the training?*

**Alan Pilot:** During the training. And this is, this is to be expected. You know, uh, and this is where you separate your, your leaders from your non-leaders. But uh, I never, of course I was with the E Company and H company later, but uh, and saw all their training, went with them, but I was their medic. And I became a blister specialist, Bill.

*A blister specialist?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yeah, I had, oh I devised all kinds of contraptions to get on the guys that come in with these horrible blisters on their feet, and I'd get me a needle and draw all the stuff out and then I'd fix me a donut, and uh, around it, you know, so it would be cushioned some. And another thing was, was while we were on maneuvers and stuff, is what you, the, the C-ration is a can, and a tin can. The guys would cut themselves. They'd open 'em up – I forgot now how they opened, but you had to, oh, you had some kind of a deal, just a little uh, can opener thing.

*I remember those.*

**Alan Pilot:** You remember that.

*Oh yeah. Yeah, those were kind of neat to have. They'd open up uh, just about any kind of can.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yeah, and the guys would cut themselves, and pretty up, you know, and I would, I, I got me a, I probably, I devised me what I'd call the butterfly stitch which was not a stitching – they'd have to go back to the aid station to get stitched up, but I would fix – I had some real gooey stuff that I put on each end of it, of the wound, and then put this over it, and it kept the wound, since it was a clean cut anyway, I would uh, take that and uh, it would close the wound and hold it tight where they didn't have to go get stitches for it. And I was pretty – and lancing boils, oh, I became good at that, too.

*What?*

**Alan Pilot:** Lancing boils.

*Oh, lancing boils. Oh boy.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yeah, well I was, I had one officer came in. He says Doc, he says I'm hurtin'. He said I don't want to go back. We were getting ready to move out. I don't want to – so I, he, it was right on his butt, and I uh, got my old trusty uh, scalpel out that I kept in alcohol and I lanced that thing and put, we called it, I'm trying to think of it – ithymol ointment. It was a real black ointment, but it would draw out the, the uh, the pus and stuff in the wound, in the uh, boil, and that worked. That worked marvels.

*So you got a lot of good training and so it took about a year or so and then by the time you were ready to ship out, you were –*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, I, I mean I, I had seen enough of it that I, you know, you, you're never prepared for what you see in combat and I had some pretty rough situations. One, one, at the very first, my roughest was where uh, he was a, he was a, a forward observer, and he had this big radio on his back and he caught a shell, a .88, which is, that was the, the weapon of, we most feared most over there. If you're familiar or anything about that German .88.

*Only a little bit, just what I've read, but uh -*

**Alan Pilot:** It, it was a high trajectory, I mean high velocity, low, great retractive bar. In other words it's like prying a, a pistol at you. A big, you could hear it go off. It would go boom-boom, then go psh-psh-psh. It would hit you just like that.

*Oh man.*

**Alan Pilot:** I mean you had no, no way to cover. But anyway, one of my first was he caught it in the stomach, and all his intestines were laying out. I had to take the hugest bandages I could and push them back in. Put, I put sulfanilamide. We had either tablet, sulfa tablets or sulfanilamide powder was what was used then, but penicillin had not come into use as yet and it wasn't until later. It was the sulfanilamide. Sprinkle that, then just pushed it all back and then valium of course got him, got him back to aid station, and I understand he lived.

*Is that right?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, he lived.

*Amazing, that's just amazing.*

**Alan Pilot:** And uh, but you wouldn't think so. Then I've had some wounds where I had a guy that was hit and I looked and looked and he was, he was, I felt his pulse and it was pretty, it was a weak pulse, and he was still alive, and I ripped open his shirt and there was a tiny little hole. I bet it wasn't a quarter of an inch there on his left breast, chest, and he had taken a piece of shrapnel and he died right after that. I mean you can't, there's, there is one type of wound that you look for and it's so minute, and he died, and then the other guy, you never know. But uh, it was, it was good experience.

*Sounds like quite an experience. Have you always been able to talk about your experiences?*

**Alan Pilot:** I haven't. We, you know when we first, I never talked about it. My kids, well, you know, I never talked about it until I went to the first division reunion. I found out about the reunion. I got a call from my old first sergeant and he said how come you haven't been to reunions? I said I had not heard about 'em. And so I went to my first one. I'm trying to think where it was. Can't remember now, I think Milwaukee. But anyway we started yawning about our experiences because we were all medics, and this was the, the medical detachment himself, the guy that they, we'd located about 32 guys, 33 guys, uh, and then we started having our own many reunions, and I was, I was one of the ones that got that going. I mean I was, I ram-rodged a lot of that, me and the first sergeant.

*How long ago did you start those reunions?*

**Alan Pilot:** It wasn't until 19 – about 10 years ago, I think. I just never, when we first come back from the service, my two of my closest buddies were Marines, so you know I didn't have a chance to open my mouth with two, two Marines. They saw a lot of action. But anyway we would all get together. There were six of us, the, the three wives and the three guys. And we, we'd talk about our some would bend because it, we were fresh out of the service, uh, and until the women would all get up in unison and they'd go ta-ta-ta-ta-ta – like they were shootin', says that's enough. So that's uh, so we, but a little bit then and after that it was out of mind. I uh, I went back and finished my education at the University of Maryland and uh, graduated June '46, and uh, with a degree in economics, and then came to, I decided I wanted to come to Texas.

I didn't want any of the East Coast. And so we got here in Waco and I'd always tell people I never made enough money to leave. But anyway that's how I ended up here.

*I see.*

**Alan Pilot:** But we did, my wife finished up her degree at Maryland also. She got, she had lacked some courses there, uh about a year lacking and she had to take a few courses there in Maryland and she got her degree and we graduated at the same time.

*That's great. I want to talk about that some more in a minute. I want to go back though. When you did go overseas and after some good, valuable training, by then you'd gotten, you'd met your future wife, you got married, she was expecting a baby, and off you go –*

**Alan Pilot:** Off I go.

*To fight in WWII.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yeah.

*And it must have been frightening for her, and you know, a proud moment, and a frightening moment -*

**Alan Pilot:** You know, she said, the whole time I was there she says she just trusted in God. She says I knew you were coming back. She says I'm just not gonna worry about it.

*Yeah.*

**Alan Pilot:** And you know I mean she, \_\_, she, you know, sure it was a, it was rough on us, but the only time that her mother, though she wasn't the, had to, after you know, I left the West Coast there in uh, San Luis Obispo is where it was, Camp San Luis Obispo, and she came directly home because she was pregnant, and stayed there, but while we, she's there, her mother, says the postman, they lived in a rural farm at, uh, out in a rural area. They, her, she was a farm girl, and uh, the postman always left the mail down at the end of the lane down there, about I don't know, 150 feet, 200 feet from the house, but anyway, her mother noticed that the postman was walking towards her. I mean he never walked up the lane to the house. She says uh-oh, something's happened to Alan. And she, but what it was, it was a, I don't know what, what it was, but it wasn't but, the letter from Uncle Sam saying your husband had been killed, but that's what she thought. But that's the only time that I think there, there was any concern I guess. I mean they didn't even know where we were until way after the roar campaign. After the roar campaign and we got filled up with guys again and we took about a week and replaced the casualties and stuff, we spear-headed Patton's, we were with Hodges before that, but we spear-headed Patton's through central Germany all the way through. If you remember reading about the redoubt area?

*Yeah.*

**Alan Pilot:** Well we, what we did and, and uh, we were commended for it later by Patton. I got the citation in there, little paper, we spear-headed his, the on the left, on the left flanks all the way down uh, through Germany. We, we had to get across the Danube River. We met up, well before then we met up with the Russians. They were coming from the East. We met up with the

Russians and that was quite a celebration. Then we had to get across the, we had to get behind the German troops being pushed also by the Russians before they could get to Austria in that redoubt area there, if they got up into there, that war could've lasted quite a few months longer. Anyway, we were, we got a bridgehead across the English dot, and this is where, that's the second time where I, I could've been killed, or I mean, by the grace of God. They were shelling us pretty heavily and one came in and landed maybe ten feet from me and it didn't go off, and you know, if it had gone off, that'd have been it.

*Right.*

**Alan Pilot:** I, I acted, as I saw it hit and it didn't bury for some reason. It bounced on back, but never went off. And we found out later that a lot of those had been sabotaged by the slave laborers as they were called, you know, the, the Germans, they took people from all countries and put 'em into factories and stuff to help their war effort. But they said that they had, had done something with the uh, uh, shells that they didn't go off, and of course, they didn't do it to all of them, but this, I'm sure this one may have been one of those. But anyway, I didn't think about it until I crossed over into, I got to safety and I just sat down and just had me a good shakin'. I just was just completely unnerved.

*Oh my, yeah.*

**Alan Pilot:** And then we got a bridgehead. I mean our, our engineer did a wonderful job under night. They set up a foot bridge and this was under fire. They put it up and we uh, the Germans had some kind of a weird shell that they would fire. They called it the screaming mimi. It would go end over end and make this God awful noise that just was very, very nerve, you know, demoralizing. It, its effect wasn't as much as their mortars and things, but it was just the sound of it, completely demoralizing. But anyway, they were throwing those at us and we would, it was our time to go across, hit that, hit the foot bridges and one of my E buddies, Company E or Company H at that one, buddy in front of me says Doc, I've been hit. I says keep goin'. I grabbed him by his belt. I said keep goin', keep goin', pushin' him, and I got over there and he says, it's my leg. I have \_\_\_\_\_. I looked down. He had gotten a piece of shrapnel or a bullet in, in his uh, canteen and all the water had come out and he thought he'd been hit. So we, we teased him about that.

*So when you were over in Europe and then over in the Asian theater, the Philippines, how was, did you get letters from home? Did you write letters?*

**Alan Pilot:** Oh yes, yes. Uh, we had mail call, even in combat once you were pulled off the line, uh, see this was a great morale factor. That mail got up there to you. A great morale factor, and they, and the, and the services realized it. But I would get five, ten, fifteen letters from, from my wife because she'd write every day. And of course I didn't have time to write. And when I did write, a couple of 'em were, I would try to tell 'em where we was and they were all cut up and she got, she kept all those letters and -

*Yeah, do you still have hers that you received?*

**Alan Pilot:** No, uh, no I don't have hers. I mean one, one time the kitchen truck coming up got blown up and I lost everything, my duffle bag, everything was gone. And I think the letters and stuff that I had kept and what souvenirs I had managed to -

*What about your mother and father? Did you communicate with them as well?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, uh, we, we kept up. Momma was real good at uh, corresponding.

*Did you have brothers and sisters?*

**Alan Pilot:** I had one brother and it was in the Navy.

*So did your mother, he was in the Navy the same time you were in the Army?*

**Alan Pilot:** He went in later. He was working for the shipyards and was exempt for a period of time. Then finally he says I gotta get in, so he had been in before, during the Depression years and uh, so he uh, he decided he wanted to go back in again.

*So he served during the war?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes. He went in about a year after I did.

*Did you mother hang the – I've seen a picture where they would, the mothers would hang stars.*

**Alan Pilot:** Oh the, the star in the windows? I don't know. I don't remember that. Uh, Bill, let me take a break. I got to go pot.

*OK, that's fine. I'll wait for you. Thank you, Doc.*

**Alan Pilot:** Feel better.

*All right. That's important. Let's see here. We were talking about your brother was over there. Your brother served in the Navy.*

**Alan Pilot:** He got into the invasion of uh, he was on what they call an AKA, and attack cargo ship which had equipment and, and troops uh, like LCDP's, and he was in the invasion of Okinawa and at Iwo Jima, on, on his ship.

*OK, so he was in the Pacific. And is he still alive?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, but very, but very, very ill. In fact, I just got back from up there.

*Does he live in Maryland?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, yes, he lives in, lives in Catonsville, Catonsville, Maryland.

*OK, so anyway you come home and then so then you're reunited with your wife I guess for that 30 days you were home?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, yes, we uh -

*Had your child been born by then?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, well, that's, he was born while I was on the high seas and I didn't even know about he was being born until I got back, we were there, and one of my buddies was uh, his wife and mine both pregnant, and in fact they went home together on the, they lived in Louisiana, and they were both, both got pregnant about the same time. Well, he and one of my other buddies, I was asleep, they came in, woke me up and said, you're a father. I said what? He said, yeah, I called Catherine and she said she's, she hadn't been \_\_\_\_, but your baby was born. So that's when I got up and put a phone call through and talked to her. That's when I found out. I was, had been asleep and uh, in fact me and one of my buddies, we went into the – couldn't, as I said I called but I couldn't call until the next morning. We went in and stayed up all night there at the, in the latrine, uh, smoking cigarettes, trying to realize that I was a father. But uh, I did not know about it. She, he was already I think about a week old or more.

*Oh when you found out?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yeah. See we got up – he was born on June the 8<sup>th</sup>. We were at high seas then because we, when the war was over in Europe, we didn't know what we were going to do. We stayed in, we had fought our way through and ended up in, in Salz – in Salzburg? Yeah, uh, in Austria. That's where we ended up because we fought on through and uh, across the Iser, then into uh, into Austria. That's where when we were there – not Salzburg. Yeah, I guess it was. Wherever, wherever Hitler's uh, redoubt area. I think that's Salzburg. I can't – anyway, that's where we ended up. But they, then we weren't there but about a week and they sent us to uh, Mannheim, Germany, and that's when we found out that we had been, we were selected to go home. Uh, we were going to be redeployed to the Pacific. So we, we didn't spend much time there and then the first part of June we were on, uh, we were at back at Camp Old Gold, and then one of them ships out of LeHavre and straight home.

*I was gonna say then you got home and uh –*

**Alan Pilot:** Got home, that was in June '45.

*So this is, so then your son was a year old?*

**Alan Pilot:** No, no, no, no, no he was just been born.

*Oh, had just been born, I see.*

**Alan Pilot:** Because they, they were just pregnant when we went over.

*Oh I see, OK.*

**Alan Pilot:** And then he was born. But anyway, got 30-day recoup, so I, I since I was inducted out of Mead, that's where they sent me, to Fort Mead, Maryland. Well I came back, saw my parents for a day or two and then caught the train to Waco, and uh, we got together there and then I was to report then back to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, and when I got settled in over there, well my wife came up there at Muskogee, Oklahoma. Muskogee, Okie from Muskogee, yup, we were there for about, not very long, in other words as I told you, to get, to get replacements in the \_\_\_\_ then and medicals were given and those guys that I think were over 35 and couldn't pass medicals then were taken out and discharged, and then this is a time where the medics had a choice of a weapon. We weren't armed in Europe, but the medics were armed in the Pacific.



*Oh, OK.*

**Alan Pilot:** And I, they had just come out with a fully automatic carbine. Now that's what my, that was my weapon of choice, and uh, which I never got issued, but -

*You never got one?*

**Alan Pilot:** No, I didn't because when we got, when we got to, to the Philippines as I said, it was all, it was over with pretty much, and it was, I had an interesting, an interesting assignment though. Uh, we went out on outpost, there was this outpost they were starting to uh, get the, the Philippine guerillas getting them into the Philippine Army to get ready for their independence. In fact, our divisions had a great part. They were still there as a division. To me it was all new people, but uh, because we as I said, we all left. We were all high point men. You got out on points. I don't know if you're familiar with that or not, but you had points that you accumulated, so much for every month of service, so many for every overseas, so much time for combat time. You got, you'd accumulate these points and that's when you, how you, that's how they'd decide how you would be discharged.

*I see. Let me ask you this. I want to ask you another question.*

**Alan Pilot:** OK.

*Did you during your time in the service, did you develop any close relationships with buddies? Long lasting friendships?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, uh, all of them are dead but one, and uh, he was my closest. He's out of Detroit, you know, uh, Gee Bashmard (sp. ???) is his name. He's a little French man. And uh, we're still in contact with one another.

*That's good.*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, he's had, he's in pretty bad shape right now because as I say, well all of us are 83, -4 or -5-6 years old, you know, so we're not -

*Getting on up there.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes. But uh, but in the Philippines, they, the division got involved in, there were certain pockets that would not, had not given up. They had to go in into because, convince them that the war was over and this, that, and the other, but as I said, I was sent out on this outpost, uh, about oh, I don't know, 100 miles, near Cabanatuan, that's where it was near. You've heard of Cabanatuan. But this, this little town of Bongalong (sp. ???) is where we were. There was not even a full company. There were probably, well, not even a platoon, hardly a platoon. But anyway there was a lieutenant and I went along as the medic because uh, there was this area in this Bageo (sp. ???) was a resort town in the hills overlooking the ocean, and it was completely surrounded by these mountains and they had dropped leaflets. There was a bunch of Japanese still active up in there and they were coming in and raiding the town for food and uh, creating problems and some casualties up there with the civilians, so they dropped pamphlets up there saying that we, we would give them safe, give back if they would surrender. And so we went up through the mountains. It took us two days to get to up there because it was a rough, path was pretty rough, and I remember trying to forge some of the streams up there, those mountain

streams. The old uh, jeep driver, a pretty ingenious guy. I mean he was pretty, he said we can't, I can't drive that across. He said it'll flood the engine. So what he did, he took the fan belt off where it wouldn't throw the water and put gum around the distributor and we took rope and we pulled that thing through these mountain streams, got it over there and then put it all back together and we got up into the, up into Bageo. Well, they had not seen American troops at all during the war because they were completely cut off, so we were, they gave us quite a welcome, and I treated wounds while I was there and uh, the Japanese never did show up. But uh, we stayed there for about three or four days, and they, they fed us, I mean they, they really put on the dog for us for the, for the time we were there, and what was interesting, I met the granddaughter of the President Quezon was the President of the Philippines during WWII and the occupation, and his, his niece I think it was, was up there, and very well educated. I think she had been educated in the States, and we got up this conversation. She knew more about the history of the United States than, than I did, but a very interesting person. But that, that's another highlight that I remember. And also the, there was a Communist group called the Hooks, the Philippines, they were very active. They were trying to overthrow the government and we got shot at two different times. I says, hey, the war is over. I says you know, I don't want nothin', but uh, one time we were in the jeep and got a point blank blast as we were coming back. We had been in town celebrating at parties and stuff and we were coming back to our campsite, and we caught this bullet. It hit the block. Fortunately it didn't stop the, the motor. We kept going. We just gunned it. And another time, we were down in the water hole, and we got uh, tied down for uh, for a period of time. Fortunately, one of the guys had a uh, had one of those deals – you've seen those great big handheld uh, almost walkie talkies, but anyway it's a radio. But they weren't very efficient over in combat, believe me, because you couldn't, they, they didn't work half the time. But anyway, we were able to get a call in for help and uh, then the Hooks pulled back. But that's, as I said I uh, I wasn't really wanting to get myself shot after the war. But there were some interesting things that happened there in the Philippines.

*During your experience in the military during the war, both here in the United States and over in Europe and then over in the Philippines, what was the hardest thing you ever did or experienced?*

**Alan Pilot:** Oh it would be, I guess the hardest would be the roar, roar pocket. You're talking about combat time?

*Any time. What was the most difficult thing you had to experience?*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, I guess I would have to say my memories are, would be on the roar. We took a lot of casualties, and had lots of, I, I guess one of the most memorable things, after we took the little town of Hershide (sp. ???), the Germans counterattacked with uh, tiger tanks, and this is the first time, I, I can remember that completely went berserk, because I was running down the street and trying to find a place to get some safety, and these tanks came right, the turn is coming right at me. Well, I ran hunting a place to hid, and I went around, I darted around what I thought was a street, was an alley, it was a dead end. And I could picture myself being a tank coming up there, turning his barrel around, you know, they weren't looking for just one person, but I, I completely and totally lost it, and I mean, I wasn't good for anything. And I guess that would say the hardest thing or whatever that I experienced. Other than that, when that shell, because that's supposed, you know, we were all in danger over there. We were in combat. You're uh, you're always in danger, and as a medic, I mean I, I had to take care of my men, and another time that there were two guys that were wounded out in an open field and I was trying to get up my nerve and they were yelling "medic," you know, when you hear the word "medic" you go –

and I was trying to get up my nerve because it was under pretty intense fire. And when this big old guy from Chicago, I'll never forget him, big old Jewish guy, just great guy, fact is, he took me under his wing and says Doc, I'm gonna stay next to you because if I get hit, you're gonna be close by. But anyway, he says let's go get 'em, Doc. And so we went out and we went out twice to get one guy and pull him back, and then another time to get the other guy, and I said I don't know whether I would've had the – let me see – nerve enough to do it on my own, because I was only 130 pounds anyway, you know. And all I needed was him to say let's go get him, Doc. That was another I think uh, memorable point in, in the war for me.

*That's a great memory. You really have retained a lot of memories it seems to me.*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, I think a lot of that was because of the, the reunions and stuff.

*Yeah.*

**Alan Pilot:** You know, that uh, we talked about it and shared our experiences, but it wasn't until a later year as I said that we did much talking, so this is all from I guess these, these reunions, I mean where we, we help remember each other. They, and incidentally my closest buddy, he was uh, he was decorated twice over there, Bashmard, decorated with the Bronze Star for actual action.

*So when you were shipped over to Camp Howse in Gainesville or near Gainesville, who was there? You got put into this division with people from, was everybody coming from Maryland?*

**Alan Pilot:** Oh yeah, they were from all over. I mean they, they, wherever the induction centers, they would get I'm sure their quotas – send so much to this division – divisions were forming very fast back then, I mean the 84<sup>th</sup>, 86<sup>th</sup>, 103<sup>rd</sup>, uh, 97 – all these divisions were being formed and uh, still being formed, and they were old. They weren't National Guard. National Guard outfits were called up early, but these were divisions that were created only under war conditions, like the 86<sup>th</sup> was also in WWI, but it was an inductee outfit, you know. But they have a cadre of people, as I told you earlier, officers and non-commissioned officers that went there and just waited on, got the camp ready, and just waited on all us guys to come in and fill it up and be assigned our different -

*I see.*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, duties and stuff.

*So here you are. You didn't, you spent all your life there on the East Coast and -*

**Alan Pilot:** Pardon?

*You spent all your life there in Baltimore?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes I did.

*And then you're thrown in with young men from all over the country.*

**Alan Pilot:** All over the country, right.

*How about that.*

**Alan Pilot:** It was an inductee outfit.

*What an experience. And so then, so the war's over and you come home and now you're with your wife and your son, and what's your son's name?*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, the son, he was Brian and he, unfortunately he died when he was 42, a heart attack.

*Oh, sorry to hear that.*

**Alan Pilot:** I've got two daughters though.

*Oh good. Grandchildren?*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, yeah, eight grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

*They're prolific.*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes man. The name shall go on.

*So then you go back up to Baltimore and you go to school?*

**Alan Pilot:** Went up there and I went back to school there. I got, oh I didn't tell you, I got a disability. Uh, I got something over into the Philippines. I don't think it was malaria because I would think, it may have been dinghy fever – it's like because we were out on this outpost, and when I came, when I got discharged, I was in pretty bad shape. The fact is, they wanted to, when they, I got sick there when we got off the ship in San – San uh, San Pedro, out, out of Los Angeles, and we were put on planes, and they wanted to put me off somewhere in between. I said hell no, I said I'm going home. But I was shakin', had high fever, and uh, when I got back – I never said anything to the people there, and on the discharge, when I was discharged I never said anything. But evidently they saw something because I got a, got notification I had a 60 percent disability. Well, that made up my mind to go back to school. I'm not sure what I wanted to do.

*So you all moved up to Baltimore.*

**Alan Pilot:** I went up there, finished, did four years up there, and then came back to Texas.

*Yeah, and you got a degree in economics?*

**Alan Pilot:** Hah?

*Your degree is in –*

**Alan Pilot:** Got a degree in economics, and I was in uh, insurance and investments for a lot of years, and then I got kind of disillusioned when something happening with the company that I didn't like, so I went to work for my old uh, boss. I went to work for the Department of Defense, a very interesting job. I was with the uh, Defense Contracts Administration, and we

administered and, and uh, negotiated the contracts for all the services. I had to move to Dallas to do that. I didn't want to, but I had to. I had two careers.

*One in the insurance – it was insurance?*

**Alan Pilot:** Insurance, yes, and the other with Uncle Sam.

*How long were you in insurance?*

**Alan Pilot:** Since been it's about 17 years, about the same amount of time with the, with the government.

*I see.*

**Alan Pilot:** And I got that and my three years, I was able to uh -

*Retire?*

**Alan Pilot:** Able to retire, so I retired at 62.

*Yeah, and so you've been retired for a while. You've had some – you've had a lot of good years since retirement.*

**Alan Pilot:** Oh yes, I was retired in '85. Yeah, I've been, I've been retired now for 20 some years. It's great. I'm enjoying it. We do a lot of, we did a lot of traveling and we did, we're cruise-a-holics. We love to cruise.

*Well good, good for you. And your wife, Theo? What was her degree in?*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, her degree was in education and uh, uh, she was in early child education. She, she was a uh, had developed a uh, day care center here for the church in her earlier years, and then when we went to Dallas, she went to work for the uh, oh, Dallas, anyway, it was a, it wasn't a United Fund operation, but she run a day care center there for a short time. Then she went into administration with them and then uh, I was getting ready to retire and she, she was offered a job here at the, the McLennan Community College, an assistant dean job I guess you would call it. But anyway, she uh, she was in administration here for a number of years, and back then, she got the job before I could retire up there, so I commuted for about a year. But we uh, we were fortunate. We bought the old home place which was, had been the farm place, and uh, when they enlarged Lake Waco where they took all that land and they moved the house up on the hill and her mother stayed there for a number of years and finally the estate decided they wanted to sell it and we said well, uh, why not, said we always been wanting a place on the lake, so we, we bought that, we bought it from the estate and that's where we lived for a lot of years. And after retirement, then since then, we moved to we call The Towers here, the condo we bought. It was getting too much for us out, for me out there. It was too much land to mess with. It wasn't that much land but it had lots of trees and you know, leaves. I just got tired of messing with it. We sold the place. Came out like a bandit on it.

*That's good.*

**Alan Pilot:** It was because it was overlooking the lake.

*Oh yeah, lake front.*

**Alan Pilot:** Actually we made our money in real estate. We sold our place in Dallas to where I'd go to Mount \_\_\_\_, or Richardson is where it was, not Dallas, Richardson. But so we've had, we've had a good life, Bill, a good life. Never, as I said, never made a whole lot of money but we were comfortable, we had a good family. The only big tragedy was losing our son. In fact, we were overseas when he died, and fortunately we were coming home the next day, so that wasn't a problem there. We already had the tickets and everything, but we were, we found out and we were in Ireland. Oh, talking about that, I went back, in '84 we went over – this is before – or no, '81, or -2, anyway, before we retired, uh, we went over to Europe with some friends, and I revisited some of the places that I had fought through, and it was very, they were very kind. They would, you know, they said yeah, we'll deviate and go over, you know, and I went to Hershide – I can't, it didn't, nothing was the same of course, many, many years later. But interesting thing, in, at Cologne, we went to the cathedral for a service, and I set there and I remembered my war experience, you know, of being shelled, and there were still marks up on the wall, shell marks, you could still see them. What they had done was, when the war, they took all the treasures out of the cathedral and took 'em somewhere else and you know, buried 'em or hid 'em and then brought 'em back after the war. And then after they redid the cathedral. But that was, that was a shell when we were there, you know.

*What was that like going back 40 years later? Was it emotional?*

**Alan Pilot:** Yes, it was for me in a way. I mean it brought back some memories of uh, in particular at Hershide which I mention that town because we took a tremendous amount of casualties there, and uh, then the English \_\_\_\_, we \_\_\_\_, fact is, this is the first time that the wife heard about our division. See they, they keep silence on that for so many months before they let you give, before they release any information, but she heard about the 86<sup>th</sup> Division getting the bridgehead across the Danube River and pushing on towards the redoubt area. That's where she found out about, about us. But that and the, and the shelling there in, in the English \_\_\_\_\_. I guess that was two things \_\_\_\_, and we went back there and we went to the actual, found the actual uh, open space. It was a, a huge cobblestone, open space where I almost got killed, and we found that square, because it wasn't too far from the river, and I did think, at least I think that's where it was anyway. So that was kind of emotional, too, for me. But uh, it was as I said, we uh, we, we toured all over Europe and we went to Italy. We went on everywhere, but they were very kind and let me go to the places where I had, you know, in combat and all.

*Well that's great. Well, Mr. Pilot, it's been a real pleasure talking to you. It really has been.*

**Alan Pilot:** Well I, I, and you know, let me say this, I, I can, it's been so many years now that I can enjoy talking about it. I mean I get a, I get a charge out of it. I appreciate that you're allowing us to talk about our experiences and stuff.

*Yeah, well, you know, this program is intended to capture the memories of your generation and what you experienced before the war, during the war, and following the war, just to capture it, so future generations can listen and learn from you.*

**Alan Pilot:** Maybe I ran off too, ran on too much, Bill -

*No, not at all. I think it was perfect. Is there anything else I didn't ask that you'd like to talk about before we wrap it up?*

**Alan Pilot:** No, except that uh, the sad thing is about our, you know, the 86<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, I haven't been going in the last couple of years. I mean part of it is health, part of it is flying. You know, flying is a hassle now, and uh, and then the sad part is of our mini reunion, there's only two of us left. You know, our medical detachment, me and the first sergeant are the only ones that uh, there were fourteen of us, and every one has since passed away.

*Well, that's, you know -*

**Alan Pilot:** No, I take it back. There's another one. There's three of us, now I recall that.

*So you are 84 years old? Is that right?*

**Alan Pilot:** 84.

*So what's your health like now?*

**Alan Pilot:** Uh, fair. I've had two open heart surgeries, uh, one minor heart attack, but outside of that, you know, and I'm on medication. In fact I'm going to see my cardiologist this afternoon. But I'm in pretty good shape considering 84. I go to rehab three times a week.

*Well you sound great. You got a lot of life in your voice.*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, yeah, I, we've been blessed, uh, both of us, uh, which we still travel quite a bit. Uh, we still like to cruise. You won't believe this, but uh, I think our next cruise will probably be our 52<sup>nd</sup> or 53<sup>rd</sup> cruise.

*Oh man, you do like to cruise.*

**Alan Pilot:** And we've been just about everywhere. We did the Alaskan cruise, the Baltic cruise, you know, which was so interesting you know, going into all the big cities there in the Baltic, including uh, St. Petersburg. You know, the ships can get into St. Petersburg. And Helsinki, Stockholm, Oslo, that was – that was a very memorable cruise for us. I recommend it.

*I think I'm gonna take you up on that.*

**Alan Pilot:** It's fun. I tell people if they don't enjoy cruising, it's their own fault. It's their own fault if they don't have a good time.

*I haven't done a cruise yet but I think I see one in my future real soon.*

**Alan Pilot:** Try out of Galveston. That's where we've gone down there at least, we've been on every ship down there two or three times.

*I'm gonna do that.*

**Alan Pilot:** They've got one in Houston, too, but I don't recommend that as much as the ones out of Galveston. And uh, how long have you been with the uh, Land -

*With the Land Office? Well I was, I worked here from January of 1988 until I think it was April of 1994, and then I left the Land Office and I felt like I was leaving the best job I ever had. It's really a great agency to work with, but I wanted to kind of expand my experience in my profession as a land surveyor and so I went into private practice and then had a lot of success, and in September of 2006, I was asked to come back and take the job as the director of the surveying division which is the chief surveyor for the State of Texas. And it's a great job. To me, it's the best surveying job in the whole state I think, maybe the whole country.*

**Alan Pilot:** That's great. How old are you, Bill?

*50. Turned 50 last summer.*

**Alan Pilot:** You're a young man then, you're a young man yet.

*I hope I got a lot of years left because I want to do a lot of traveling like you've been doing.*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, do it because as I said, you got to capture it when you can.

*That's right and try to stay healthy to enjoy all those years.*

**Alan Pilot:** Well Bill, it's been a great pleasure.

*Well Doc, I've enjoyed talking to you, too, and I wish you the best of luck –*

**Alan Pilot:** Thanks a lot.

*And tell your wife it was, I feel like I sort of met her, too. Tell her I said hi, please.*

**Alan Pilot:** When will I, when do you think this will all come out where I can get copies or whatever? When are you gonna, anticipate uh, a transcript of it or what?

*You know, what they do, my understanding is anyway they have other volunteers who will do a transcript or transcribe this interview and get it onto paper, and then it will go on to the, I don't know if you've been to the web site –*

**Alan Pilot:** You know what, Bill? I don't even own a computer. I don't want a computer. My girls fuss at me all the time.

*You know, the Veterans Land Board has set up a web site – they have a web site, but they set up a portion of the web site that has interviews that have already been conducted that you can listen to online. I wish somebody could take you to it so you could listen to some of the others. But yours, this interview will go online at some point. I don't, really honestly I don't know how long it takes. I don't think it's real long. I think one of the problems they were having when they started this program was they could do the interviews, but they didn't really have the process in place to get them transcribed and get them kind of cleaned up where they could put them online for everybody else to listen to, but they've been working on that and they've started interviews again because I think they curtailed the interviews for a little while so they could catch up on the other end of it. So I really don't know, but I think, I would say I would take a wild guess and say it's probably somewhere between three and six months.*



**Alan Pilot:** Well I'll get my girls I've got – will this be where they can pick it up anywhere?

*When it's online you can pick it up anywhere, and as far as the transcript goes, I'll talk to James Crabtree who is the person in the agency who's kind of ramrodding this –*

**Alan Pilot:** When that transcript comes, it'll show on there how to get online to it and all that so I can give it so the kids can -

*Yes sir, that's right.*

**Alan Pilot:** OK.

*And it's real easy to find, it really is. Anybody, I'm sure any of your kids, your grandkids, great grandkid anyway could probably show you how to get there –*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, that'd be, that'd be great because they all have computers.

*Yeah, everybody's got computers.*

**Alan Pilot:** Everybody's got -

*Almost everybody, right?*

**Alan Pilot:** Almost.

*You've seen a lot of changes in your life, haven't you, in technology?*

**Alan Pilot:** Oh, you know, if it wasn't for, for medical science advancing like it is, I wouldn't be here, Bill, because it's through the advancement of medical technology that I'm able to talk to you, really, because you think about the advancements in, in heart care, what they do nowadays, to what it was 40 years, 30 years ago. I had my first one in '87, and my second one, that one, that bypass lasted 13 years and then it, I had, that broke down and I had to have another one, bypass to bypass the bypass, but uh -

*Wow, so you've had some work done on that heart.*

**Alan Pilot:** Oh yeah, there's not a, I tell you, you ought to see the, you ought to see the, the uh, the scars on my body. My legs and arms, oh, something else.

*Well, you just keep on living, all right?*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, and as I said, I basically took care of myself, so and I've definitely been doing it the last 20 years, and that's for sure.

*All right. Well when is your next cruise plan, you got one?*

**Alan Pilot:** Well, we want, there's a new ship coming in in Galveston uh, and we want to take it because it's only gonna be there for about three or four months, and it's starting in I think in February, so we're planning on, on taking it out of there and sometime in February or March.

*Great.*

**Alan Pilot:** But uh, we, but we, as long, you know, cruising is just, you know, it's, it's the cheapest way that you can get room and board, your meals and entertainment for about \$100 a day each. That's pretty reasonable.

*Yeah, it is.*

**Alan Pilot:** So I hope I've sold you on it, Bill.

*You did.*

**Alan Pilot:** Are you married?

*I am.*

**Alan Pilot:** All right, you take that good wife on a cruise.

*I will. All right sir, well it was great talking to you.*

**Alan Pilot:** Thanks for talking to you and take care.

*All right now, you too, bye bye.*